



How to Manage Stress

Stress is a serious subject. Check the facts.

- In 1984, industry spent more than \$1 billion dollars because of absenteeism, decreased productivity and in health related expenses. By 1986, the amount was \$150 billion.
- The National Council on Compensation Insurance reported in 1986 that 18% of the occupational disease claims were stress related, a 30% increase from 1985. In 1970, occupational stress claims in California were 2.5% of total claims compared to 50% in 1986.
- The National Institute on Occupational Health and Safety reports that 50% of all accidents are caused by stress.
- According to Dr. John Roche of the American Institute of Stress, Montreal Canada, 70% to 90% of all visits to a physician are either caused or worsened by stress.

Stress is known to have some damaging effects on the body as well. Actually, it "can wreck your body without your knowing it," says Dr. Jay Segal, associate professor of health education and director of the Stress Research and Biofeedback Laboratory at Temple. Over a period of years, stress can lead to heart attacks, gastrointestinal problems and hypertension. Prolonged stress can adversely affect the body's immune functions, reducing its ability to ward off disease.

Because of these effects, it is important to recognize stress related symptoms to prevent future ailments. They include: tension headaches; migraine (vascular) headaches; stomach aches; abnormal breathing; gas, muscle cramps, diarrhea; dizziness, nausea and vomiting; hyperventilation, heart pounding; skin rashes and allergies.

Health professionals are battling this widespread problem through stress education. Segal, who has been doing research in this area for 13 years, gives lectures and workshops on stress. In addition, he serves as a consultant to hospitals, wellness centers and businesses. To help identify the symptoms of stress, Segal created the Personal Fitness and Stress Profile, a new professional testing and analysis procedure that is considered a major advance in stress management.

Segal says experiences or events may not necessarily cause stress. It's one's perception of an event that determines if his body will find it threatening. The threat induces stress. For example, too much work on the job may cause one person to experience stress because the work has become a burden. However, someone else may enjoy the challenge and find fulfillment in a heavy work load. "The real problem is not the outside source—the job, kids, mortgage, term paper—it's our reaction to it. That's something we can control," Segal says. He explains that it is not harmful to be upset with an event, person or situation as an immediate emo-

tional response. The negative results emerge when we repeatedly agonize through the occurrence, concentrating too much energy on one reaction.

Food can also cause stress, especially that which contains caffeine—coffee, chocolate, tea, soft drinks, etc. Caffeine, a drug, usually results in withdrawal symptoms that can include headaches, fatigue, anxiety and mild depression. Food can cause stress because of its impact on the human energy supply. A general rule, Segal says, is to increase the fiber and reduce sugar, salt and fat intake.

Dr. Segal gives the following tips on how to manage stress:

- Watch the coffee
- Don't fight the clock
- Don't hold in feelings
- Don't rush through meals
- Don't try to please everyone
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
- Don't set yourself up for disappointments
- Learn to say 'no' a little bit more
- Allow time for play
- Count your blessings

For further information about stress management and Dr. Segal's Personal Fitness and Stress Profile, please write to:

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